THE NEW INDIAN EXPRESS

BENGALURU • WEDNESDAY • JANUARY 24, 2024 • ₹9.00 • PAGES 24 • LATE CITY EDITION

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India-set, To Kill a Tiger, nominated for Oscars

To Kill a Tiger, set in a small Indian village, was on Tuesday nominated for the best documentary feature at the 2024 Academy Awards. A Canadian production, 'To Kill a Tiger' is directed by Delhi-born Nisha Pahuja, an Emmy-nominated filmmaker based in Toronto. The film follows a man's uphill battle to find justice for his 13-year-old daughter, who was abducted and later sexually assaulted by three men | **P11**

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KARPOORI GETS BHARAT RATNA

OBC leader to be conferred highest civilian award posthumously; BJP expects Bihar bounce

RAJESH KUMAR THAKUR @ New Delhi

IN what appeared to be a well-thoughtout plan to draw votes of the Other Backward Classes (OBCs) in Bihar in the upcoming Lok Sabha elections, Rashtrapati Bhavan on Tuesday announced the conferring of the nation's highest civilian award, the Bharat Ratna, on veteran socialist and former chief minister Karpoori Thakur posthumously. The award was last conferred on late president Pranab Mukherjee in 2019.

Tuesday's announcement came on the eve of Thakur's birth centenary. It is expected to resonate with Bihar's OBCs, who constitute 27.12% of the population, as per the caste survey done by the state a few months ago.

Widely hailed as a *Jan Nayak* (people's hero), Thakur served as chief minister of Bihar from December 1970 to June 1971 and from December 1977 to April 1979. He passed away on February 17, 1988. His son Ram Nath Thakur is now with the JD(U) and is a member of the Rajya Sabha.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi described Thakur as a beacon of social justice and a great *Jan Nayak* in a post on 'X'. "I am delighted that the government of India has decided to confer the Bharat Ratna on the beacon of social justice, the great *Jan Nayak* Karpoori Thakur ji and that too at a time when we are marking his birth centenary. This prestigious recognition is a testament to his enduring efforts as a champion for the marginalised and a stalwart of equality and empowerment," Modi said.

Thakur was known for his simplicity and was always approachable. Born in 1924 in the barber community at Pitaunjhia (now named as Karpoori gram) in Bihar's Samastipur district, he joined the Quit India Movement and was jailed for 26 months. He worked as a school teacher after Independence in a village school but later became MLA in 1952 from the Tajpur assembly seat on a Socialist party ticket.

Just the other day, the ruling JD(U) in Bihar had demanded the Bharat Ratna for Thakur.

It was during Thakur's tenure as CM that the recommendations of the Mungeri Lal Commission on quotas for backward classes, were introduced in the state. The Mungeri Lal panel was a forerunner of the Mandal Commission. **PTI**

Devotees gather outside the main gateway of the Ram temple on Tuesday | PTI

Ayodhya saturated, struggles to deal with sea of devotees

NAMITA BAJPAI @ Lucknow

A day after the consecration of Ram Lalla, a sea of devotees visited the new temple on Tuesday as it opened for the public. Over five lakh devotees got darshan of the deity during the day. Many of them had reached Ayodhya from across the country. They remained on the streets all night and queued up in front of the main gate even before dawn for the darshan.

By and by, the crowd got bigger and bigger leading to a stampede-like situation. Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath had to rush to the temple and use the public address system to appeal for cooperation from the devotees before some order was restored.

He also held a high-level meeting on crowd management with senior officials of police and the district administration.

In the meantime, many devotees got injured or fainted as they were shoved around by the crowd. While three persons — one each from Andhra Pradesh, Odisha, and Bihar — got fractures and were admitted to medical college and district hospital, many others suffered suffocation and fainted. They were sent to different hospitals for medical attention.

Authorities closed Ayodhya's border to restrict the inflow of devotees. Police authorities issued an appeal to the people to postpone their plan for Ayodhya at least for a few days.

Ram Path — the main thoroughfare — was choked. About 8,000 security personnel tried to manage the crowd. "There was a sudden massive rush," said Divisional Commissioner Gaurav Dayal. He claimed the administration was taking every measure to manage the crowd through proper holding area, queuing and barricading.

GUARANTEES' EFFECT

Beer prices to go up by 10% in K'taka soon

BALA CHAUHAN/MOHAMMED YACOOB @ Bengaluru

AHEAD of the state budget, the Siddaramaiah government is proposing to increase the prices of beer by 10%.

After the proposed revision, a 650ml bottle of beer would cost an additional Rs 8 to Rs 10 per bottle. The government issued a notification on January 20 seeking public objections by January 26. The official order on revised beer prices will be issued by January-end.

The reason for the sudden pre-budget hike is being attributed to alleged lack of resources and to win back consumers of Indian Made Liquor (IML), who have shifted to strong beer after Chief Minister Siddaramaiah increased the Additional Excise Duty (AED) by 20% on all 18 slabs of IML in his budget in July, 2023.

"Around five to 10% of IML consumers have shifted to strong beer post the budget. The increase in beer prices is an effort to wean them back to IML. The government is losing out on Excise revenue because of the shift," sources said.

In the budget to be presented in February, Siddaramaiah may not increase AED on IML and beer because of the impending Lok Sabha elections, they said. With the Congress government allocating Rs 50,000 crore for its five guarantee schemes in May last, "the move to further tax alcohol to raise resources," was anticipated, the sources said.

CONTINUED ON: P7

EXPRESS READ

Not consulted over posts to boards, corporations: Dr G

Bengaluru: Home Minister G Parameshwara on Tuesday said Congress leaders did seek suggestions of senior leaders while preparing the list of probables for boards and corporations. **P4**

India not a permanent UNSC member is absurd: Musk

New York: Billionaire tech magnate Elon Musk has said it is "absurd" that India does not have a permanent seat on the UN Security Council despite being the most populous country on Earth.

1 DAY TO GO
THINKEDU CONCLAVE

6 INDIANS IN FRENCH CONTINGENT AT R-DAY

French President Emmanuel Macron will be the Chief Guest. A 95-member marching contingent and 33-member band from France will take part. Two Rafale fighters and an Airbus A330 multi-role tanker aircraft of the French Air Force will also feature in the celebrations

Indian tectonic plate moving, land shrinking

BOSKY KHANNA @ Bengaluru

INDIA'S land mass is reducing at a pace of over 2mm per year. This is because the Indian tectonic plate is shifting towards the Eurasian plate. This collision, which has been happening for some time now, has caught the attention of scientists and seismologists globally.

This is more so because the Himalayan mountains, the highest in the world, are still young and while they are growing taller because of the collision with the Eurasian plates, they are also splitting into layers on the surface.

Scientists said while the collision is slower on land, it is happening at a faster pace in the oceans. This is because the continental plates are thick and more buoyant when compared to the denser oceanic plates. They said due to this, there will be more earthquakes in northeast India, North India and in Tibet. This split is different from what is happening in east Africa, where the rift is leading to the formation of a new ocean and a new microcontinent. **P7**

Assam police file FIR against Rahul for 'wanton acts of violence'

PRASANTA MAZUMDAR @ Guwahati

THE Assam police on Tuesday registered an FIR against Congress leader Rahul Gandhi and others accusing them of indulging in wanton acts of violence. The Rahul-led Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra is currently in Assam and the alleged infractions took place while partymen broke barricades and clashed with police personnel. In the scuffle, both sides reportedly sustained injuries.

"With reference to wanton acts of violence, provocation, damage to public property and assault on police personnel today by Cong members, an FIR has been registered against Rahul Gandhi, KC Venugopal, Kanhaiya Kumar and other individuals under section 120(B)1 43/147/188/283/353/332/333/427 IPC R/W Sec. 3 of PDPP Act," Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma posted on social media platform X.

Earlier, Sarma had asked Assam's Director General of Police to register a case against Rahul for 'provoking' the crowd to break the police barricade, which was erected to prevent the yatra from entering Guwahati through busy routes. Equating the crowd behaviour with 'Naxalite tactics', he said they have no place in a peaceful state like Assam. "Such Naxalite tactics are completely alien to our culture. I have instructed @DGPAssamPolice to register a case against your leader @RahulGandhi for provoking the crowd & use the footage you have posted on your handles as the evidence," Sarma wrote on X, reacting to a video posted by Youth Congress national president Srinivas B V.

He also shared a video on X showing Rahul and Congress's Assam in-charge Jitendra Singh 'provoking' party supporters to attack the police.

Later, Rahul said the CM's action shows the BJP is scared of the success of his yatra.

Congressmen breach police barricade in Guwahati on Tuesday

'NOT AT ALL SCARED'

Reacting to Assam CM Himanta Biswa Sarma's direction to the state police chief to file a case against him, Congress leader Rahul Gandhi said he does not get intimidated and will continue to fight for truth. "The thing is, when they disrupt the yatra, they help it," he added

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